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THE CHINESE STUDENT MIGRATION TO TOKYO



JOHN R. MOTT





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BY

JOHN R. MOTT

FOREIGN DEPARTMENT, INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE,
YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATIONS
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“ When China is moved, it will change the face
of the globe. ”

—NAPOLEON.

The Chinese Student Migration to Tokyo

THE most striking fact in the student world in recent years has been the migration of such large numbers of Chinese students to the capital city of Japan. It was only ten years ago that two young men went from Shanghai as the first officially commissioned students of China to study in Japan. As recently as six years ago, when I was delivering a lecture in the Imperial University in Tokyo, I observed a few Chinese students in the audience and on inquiring the number of Chinese students then in Japan was told that it probably did not exceed a score. Two years later the number had grown to 500; the next year it exceeded 2,000. In the following year the Chinese students came over to Japan at the rate of about 500 each month so that by the end of that year, 1905, there were over 8,000 of them in Japan. In the autumn of 1906 the Japan Mail stated that there were then fully 13,000. Mr. Brockman, national general secretary of the Association movement of China, who was in Japan at that time, said that every steamer coming from China brought large numbers of these students and that

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on one vessel there were over 1,000. Last spring at the time of the Conference of the World's Student Christian Federation, there were in Tokyo, according to the estimate of the Chinese Ambassador, not less than 15,000. Since then the number has decreased, but according to the latest reports it still exceeds 10,000.

In the history of the world there has been no such extensive migration of students from one land to another in so short a period. Many American young men and women have gone to Europe to study but probably at no time has their number exceeded 2,000. Each year may be found in the universities of Great Britain and the United States a few scores of students who have come all the way from India. In the Swiss universities are to be found hundreds of students from Russia and from the countries of south-eastern Europe. When Japan turned from her Oriental exclusiveness to learn what the Occident had to teach, she had at the most 1,700 of her youth in American colleges and a few hundreds in the universities and schools of Europe. Even in the Middle Ages, when great throngs of students streamed from different parts of Europe to sit at the feet of such intellectual leaders as Abelard, the number coming

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from other lands never swelled to such dimensions as those which characterize this remarkable exodus of Chinese students. Here we find not several hundreds, but several thousands of young men who have come out from the proudest nation, the most conservative nation, the most secluded nation—aptly called the Walled Kingdom—to sit at the feet of their conqueror in order to learn the secret of her progress and power.

These Chinese students have come from every province of China. As one studies the accompanying map of China which shows the sources from which over 10,000 have come, he is impressed with the fact that over 600 have gone to Tokyo from the westernmost province, Szechwan, which stands before the gates of Tibet. It is said that this involves a journey, which, in point of time, is more than equivalent to that involved in going around the world. Even more striking is the fact that the largest number from any one province, 1,250, have come from Hunan, which was the last province to admit missionaries to residence and which less than a decade ago was resisting the introduction of the telegraph. As these students have been drawn from all parts of the Chinese Empire, their

exodus may well be regarded as a national movement.

In the early stages of the migration fully half of the students were sent to Japan by various provincial and local governments of China. It is said that of those now studying in Tokyo probably not more than one third are supported by Government funds. The others have been sent by wealthy families, by groups of poor families, by guilds, and by various other organizations and societies. The motives actuating these young men are various. Some have come out of mere curiosity. Others have come with earnest and sincere desire to learn what Japan has to teach. Many have been powerfully influenced by the thought that study in Japan is a sure path to political preferment. It is doubtless true that practically all of these students are more or less animated with the patriotic desire to prepare themselves to do something for China. While a certain number spend their time in idling, in political agitation, and in dissipation, it may be said that, speaking generally, this great body of students is dominated by more serious purposes. They have been drawn largely from the highest and best classes of China. Many of them have



Chinese Branch, Tokyo Young Men's Christian Association.



Reading Room, Chinese Branch, Tokyo.

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had good training in the Chinese literature and among them are not a few degree men. A census taken under the direction of the Chinese Government showed that the average age of these students is twenty-three. Only a few score among them are women students. Very few come over to Japan as Christians. While in China, most of them were not only non-Christian in sentiment but also anti-Christian. As a rule they have cut off their queues and adopted European dress.

Japan was not prepared for any such inrush of Celestial Rhodes scholars nor were the Chinese sufficiently well educated in Western learning and methods to make the best use of the advantages afforded by the Japanese system of education. Only a comparatively small number have been found eligible to enter the higher Japanese institutions of learning. It became necessary either to establish institutions expressly for the Chinese or to add Chinese departments to existing institutions. Probably over one half of all the Chinese students in Tokyo are now attached to less than a dozen institutions. The others are scattered through some forty other schools or are studying privately. Just as in the case of the Japanese students, the largest concentration of

Chinese students is found in that division of Tokyo known as Kanda, and two thirds of the total number of Chinese in Tokyo are working in institutions within a circle the diameter of which is not over three miles.

Recently, as has been pointed out, there has been a decline in the number of Chinese students in Tokyo. This is partly due to the action of the Chinese Government in its efforts to eliminate the political agitators and those who had identified themselves with the revolutionary propaganda. Another prominent cause has been the attitude of the Japanese educators and others in discouraging the coming or remaining of short-term students. Many had come over with the thought that within a few months they could acquire the Western learning and prepare themselves for rapid advancement. These so-called rapid-finish students are now refused permission to flock to Japan, and instructions have been sent to the Chinese provincial authorities to discourage their coming. There is also a growing feeling among Chinese teachers and leaders against their young men going to Japan save for special and advanced studies. The reduction in the number of students owing to these causes will be recognized as a great

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advantage. The elimination of the undesirable elements has served to magnify the opportunity presented by those of more serious purpose who remain. Even though the Chinese Government should withdraw all the students sent over at her expense there would still remain the large majority now in Tokyo who have come at private expense. It requires no prophet to see, now that the tide has set toward Tokyo, that there will be, for years to come, thousands of the most ambitious and capable Chinese youth studying in that city. While increasing numbers will journey for this purpose to Europe and America, much larger numbers will continue to go to this intellectual capital of Asia owing to geographical proximity, economic considerations, racial affinity, linguistic advantages, and the great prominence of Japanese influence in China.

The moral and religious conditions surrounding the Chinese students in Tokyo are most alarming. They are in the midst of influences tending to materialism, to extreme radicalism, and to gross immorality. The old anchors of Confucianism and Buddhism have been cast off. They are removed from parental oversight. They are free from all their old restraints. Al-

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though most of them are married, their wives have been left behind. They are constantly exposed to obscene story-tellers, dancing girls, low theatres, and houses where vice is cheap and "safe" and therefore doubly dangerous and deadly. They have come from a country where the place of woman is in seclusion. They find themselves in a city where thousands of Japanese girl students are allowed to run about almost as freely as boys and where the attractions of impurity are almost always present. Many of their boarding houses are little better than houses of ill-repute. They are cut off largely from the good influences which might come from the Japanese because they have little knowledge of the Japanese language. They are exposed to the active forces of agnosticism and skepticism. There is a general tendency to throw off all religious restraint. There is a feverish and restless demand for change. Until very recently Chinese political agitators have industriously tried to fill the minds of these students with anti-Christian and anti-foreign ideas. It may be questioned whether any body of students in the world have been thrown into a greater vortex of temptation or been exposed to graver perils.

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The Young Men's Christian Association movement of China and Japan was the first agency to recognize the urgent need of putting forth special efforts to help these young men who were thrown as strangers in the midst of a strange city. The first thorough investigation of the situation was made in December, 1905, by Mr. D. Willard Lyon, one of the national traveling secretaries of the Chinese Associations. As a result of his masterly report the Association movement of China decided to undertake a comprehensive campaign on behalf of these students. When their action was reported to the local missionary conference of Shanghai that body passed the following resolution: "We have learned with profound thankfulness that the General Committee of the Young Men's Christian Associations of China, Korea, and Hongkong, on which are representative missionaries from all parts of China, has determined upon such an effort. This organization seems to us a providential one for undertaking a work of this kind." During 1906 the Association inaugurated a special campaign and sent over from China Mr. Clinton, one of its most efficient secretaries, to take charge. The co-operation of a number of the missionaries and Chinese workers

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connected with different missions in China was secured and the Association movement of Japan did all in its power to assist. Remarkable success attended these efforts. Two strong Associations were built up each with a membership of over 500. Points of contact with the Chinese students were established by means of night classes, courses of lectures, reading rooms, special scientific demonstrations, social functions, and many other practical means of helpfulness. The confidence and sympathy thus won opened the doors for the propagation of Christian truth through apologetic addresses, Bible classes, Christian literature, and individual work with individuals. From the beginning there has been in the pathway of these unselfish efforts an unbroken line of genuine conversions to the Christian faith.

The notable Conference of the World's Student Christian Federation held in Tokyo last April and the accompanying evangelistic campaign afforded a rare opportunity for leaders in Christian work among students of many lands to bring to bear the influence of their Christian message and personality upon these representative young men of China. Of 3,000 Chinese students who heard their appeals during the days of

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the Conference, 250 publicly avowed their purpose to become disciples of Jesus Christ. A number of these have since been baptized and many others are now receiving preparatory instruction in the Christian faith. Owing to the comparative inaccessibility of Government students and of the old *literati* class, Dr. Arthur H. Smith may not have overstated the truth when he expressed the conviction that the Young Men's Christian Association could do more in one year in Tokyo to reach the future leaders of China than could be done in China by all the missionaries in that country. Notwithstanding all that has been said about the awful temptations which beset these young men in a foreign capital, their accessibility and responsiveness to Christian effort constitute a ground for great encouragement. They are detached from their old conservative environment, restraints and prejudices. They are concentrated largely within a three-mile circle. They all understand the Mandarin dialect. Their many student organizations facilitate communicating with them. Their isolation and loneliness favor friendly approach on their behalf. Experience has shown that they are remarkably open to the offices of friendship.

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It is both interesting and suggestive to see how this practical ministry of helpfulness is regarded by leading men both Christian and non-Christian. The Chinese Ambassador to Japan although not a Christian has co-operated in every way in his power to further the work of the Association movement among the Chinese students. Speaking at the dedication of the building of the Chinese Student Association he expressed himself as follows: "Recently China has been sending her young men over to Japan by the thousands. Many of them are studious and have great aims in life; but some of them, I am sorry to say, are below the standard and are doing things which cause people to disrespect them and which bring disgrace upon the whole Chinese student body in Tokyo. Some of those who are deeply interested in China's welfare have seen the necessity of doing something for her young men in Japan and have asked me to co-operate with them in establishing the Chinese Young Men's Christian Association in Tokyo. I am glad to see the successful work which you are now doing. An organization of young men such as yours has great opportunities and great responsibilities; and great things are to be accom-



Inauguration of the Educational Classes. Attendance 1400.



Some Students Christianized Since Reaching Tokyo, with the Secretarial Staff.

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plished by you through education and other ways."

Count Okuma, one of Japan's leading Elder Statesmen, who is also president of Waseda University in Tokyo, thus comments upon this work: "I am glad to hear that the Chinese Young Men's Christian Association has been organized in Tokyo and I wish to offer congratulations on the successful beginning of this work. I have great hope of the Chinese students. When, after some years of study they return to China and take high positions, their influence cannot be overestimated. They are to be very powerful factors in the New China."

Baron Makino, the Imperial Minister of Education of Japan, in an interview with the Association secretary said: "This great and unexpected influx of students has overtaxed all our educational facilities. It is of course impossible for the Japanese Government to meet the needs of this great army of students. I am glad that the Chinese Young Men's Christian Association has undertaken to help these students. I think your work is greatly needed. Besides knowledge these men need friends and need social opportunities and moral restraints."

The Centenary Missionary Conference of China, attended by nearly a thousand missionaries representing all the European and American societies working in the Chinese Empire, unanimously passed the following resolution: "Whereas, the Young Men's Christian Association at the request of the Shanghai Missionary Association has already started a very strong work among the Chinese students in Tokyo, who present a field of emergency and opportunity, therefore: Resolved, that we recommend that a few missionaries and Chinese workers should be temporarily loaned when possible to the Young Men's Christian Association as it may request assistance for work among the Chinese students in Tokyo."

As a result of this resolution the Association movement is now seeking to secure a staff of not less than twenty foreign and Chinese workers chosen with reference to their ability to appeal to students, to devote the coming months to a concerted effort on their behalf. Leading missionary societies of Europe and America have indicated their willingness to co-operate under the leadership of the Association movement. Funds are being sought and offered to defray the expenses of the campaign. The objects of all this work

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are: first, to Christianize as many of these young men as possible; and secondly, to lead all the others to regard sympathetically the teachings and representatives of Christianity.

It would be difficult to overstate the far-reaching importance of this organized effort on behalf of the students of China. From their ranks are to come a disproportionate share of the leaders of the New China. They will furnish thousands of the principals and teachers in the lower schools which are springing up all over that Empire, and hundreds of the presidents and professors of the higher colleges and universities. From among them will come the leaders in the vast industrial development of China. They will furnish the moving spirits of her new political life and institutions. From their ranks will come the men who are to set the standards and determine the attitude and influence of the learned professions in China. Who can measure what it will mean to transform these men from enemies to friends and propagators of the Christian faith. What will it not mean in the breaking down of prejudice and the unlocking for the Christian propaganda of doors to the influential classes of China. Few people have awakened to the fact that we are to

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see reproduced on a colossal scale in China during the next fifteen years what has actually taken place in Japan during the past thirty years. Never in the history of the human race have such vast multitudes of people undergone such stupendous changes as are now in progress in China. The present is the time of times. The place of all places to bring to bear the influences of pure Christianity is the capital city of Japan. Without doubt the key to China is in Tokyo and that key is in the hands of the Chinese students who are to furnish the leaders of that mighty nation of four hundred millions of people.

Foreign Mail Annual

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